

# *Dave at Night* by Gail Carson Levine

## Summary

When his father dies, Dave knows nothing will ever be the same. And then it happens. Dave lands in an orphanage - the cold and strict Hebrew Home for Boys in Harlem - far from the life he knew on the Lower East Side. But he's not so worried. He knows he'll be okay. He always is. If it doesn't work out, he'll just leave, find a better place to stay. But it's not that simple. Outside the gates of the orphanage, the nighttime streets of Harlem buzz with jazz musicians and swindlers; exclusive parties and mystifying strangers. Inside, another world unfolds, thick with rare friendships and bitter enemies. Perhaps somewhere, among it all, Dave can find a place that feels like home.

281 pages, 5th grade and up

## Discussion questions

Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Why do you think friendship is so important to Dave? Who are his true friends in the story? Why?
2. Dave and the other eleven guys call each other buddies. What does it mean to be a buddy? How is a buddy different from a brother? How is a buddy different from a friend?
3. Many difficult things happen to Dave throughout the story: he becomes an orphan, he's separated from his brother, and bullies bother him. How does Dave deal with each of these hardships? Overall, would you consider *Dave at Night* a sad story? Why or why not?
4. Irma Lee doesn't go to school and spends most of her time with her mother's friends at late-night parties. Why do you think this is? How do you think her social situation affects her friendship with Dave?
5. What's a gonif? According to Solly, is it good or bad to be one?

6. Dave lives on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, while Irma Lee lives uptown in Harlem. What are these neighborhoods like? What kinds of people live there? What kinds of people live in your neighborhood?
7. What is the scar that Dave got and why is it important for Dave to remember?
8. Even though Dave's father has recently passed away, Dave writes him letters during study time at the Hebrew Home for Boys. Why do you think he does this? In what ways do these letters help Dave in his new situation?
9. Dave is continually told that he should follow the rules and not be a troublemaker. What sorts of things happen when he breaks the rules? Are these good or bad things?
10. When his father dies, Dave finds himself without a home. Where does he belong? Where does he find the most happiness?